

Canadians and British Diplomacy

By THE MONOCLE MAN

THE present confusion—as I write—in the British Capital over vital questions of diplomacy, foreign relations, Balkan negotiations and military strategy, will—if we will but look squarely into it—reveal to us just what a certain school of thought in this country are constantly prodding us up to demand when they insist that we should share in the guidance of Imperial policy if we are to be asked to share in its burdens. That is, they argue that we should not have to fight for what our diplomats do unless we help tell these diplomats what to do. Yet if these men have had their ears to the ground, they will have noted that the privileged electors of the United Kingdom have not been telling the British diplomats or rulers what to do in this most critical time in our history—not to any extent that you would notice.

THIS is plain at a glance. How much did the voter in London or Midlothian know of what went on of late in regard to Balkan bargaining or military strategy? The first that he heard of the critical operation of landing Allied troops on Greek soil was after it had been done; and he only heard it then as a vague rumour which as a rule he proceeded to disbelieve. He was not consulted. He was not advised. He was committed to this whole policy before he heard of it. I am not suggesting that he should have been consulted. It is only possible to wage war by secret councils and hidden plans which reveal themselves to the enemy in the form of surprise attacks. It is only possible to conduct a foreign policy by secret negotiations and carefully concealed manoeuvres and cypher communications. There is no use talking nonsense about it. Government by public meeting is impossible, touching matters in which the most profound and well-preserved secrecy is an imperative condition of success.

BUT, in such a time as this, it becomes plainer to the average man how little it is possible for him to know about his own business in these delicate and difficult fields of foreign politics, if he wants that business to be effectively transacted. And, of course, he does. A failure in his foreign policy or his military preparations may mean the needless killing of his boy on the field of battle. But, so long as his foreign policies must be pushed in competition with the foreign policies of secret oligarchies—such as the German—he must meet secrecy with secrecy, or suffer inevitable defeat on every occasion, because his plans are known in advance by his rivals or his enemies.

IMMERLY mention this—not at all to dissuade our people from accepting a share in the government of the Empire—they must inevitably assume that share—but to help in getting before our minds quite clearly what it is we are being urged to demand. It is simply that we send a few of our public men over to London to begin learning the business of diplomacy and foreign politics and international manoeuvring and military preparedness. All this will be good for them and good for us. I am wholly in favour of it. But what I am trying to suggest is that our people should not imagine for a moment that this will mean that they themselves will be asked to share in these intricate and necessarily secret operations. If they are led to expect this, they will be disappointed—they will look for too much from the men we send over—they may interfere with the smooth working of the Imperial machine.

CANADA will have to do exactly what Great Britain and Ireland do—namely, she will be compelled to select a small representative group who will go over to London, learn all they can about the government of the Empire, the intricate business of diplomacy and the best methods of defending the one and supporting the other; and then will share in these tasks on our behalf. We shall have to trust them utterly. We shall not know what they are doing in our name until after they have done it. All we can do, if we do not like what they have done, is to recall them and replace them with other men who will proceed to do precisely as they like behind closed doors. That is, we will be exactly in the position of the free-born British voters in this regard. They can sometimes—where the opposition differs—turn a Government out if they do not approve of its foreign policy; but they can seldom escape from the obligation of carrying out that policy. We, of course, cannot turn the Imperial Government out—all we can do is to punish our representatives who probably will have been no more than pupils of the British experts throughout the whole business.

THE need of saying these things and getting them clearly before our minds, is chiefly to let the thunder out of the campaign which is waged from time to time on the lines that Canadians should

not be asked to share in the costs of Britain's foreign policy until they are invited to share in shaping it. It sounds so plausible that our people may be taken in by it. They may imagine that they are being barred out of the council chamber when their fellow British subjects, who live in London and Midlothian, are sitting comfortably down in "the seats of the mighty," telling Grey and Asquith and Lansdowne how to govern the Empire and fool the foreigner. So that it is just as well that they should realize promptly that they are not being so discriminated against. What is being denied them is—so far as foreign politics go—the little-used power possessed by the British voter to turn out one set of Foreign Office experts and put in another, who will usually proceed to carry out exactly the policy of their predecessors. For, while a Liberal Foreign Minister

does not dream of consulting the British people—or even the British Parliament—or even the whole of his own Cabinet—regarding his policy toward foreign nations, he does consult constantly with the foreign policy experts of the Conservative party; and vice versa.

LET us by all means get into the game as soon as we can. Our contribution of soldiers to the armies of the Empire at the present time is by far the longest step we have yet taken toward representation on the governing bodies of the Empire. Sir Robert Borden speaks with an augmented weight in London every time a Canadian gets into the King's uniform. It doesn't matter so much what they call him or to what committee they call him. Fighting weight is what counts to-day. Let us send our permanent representatives to London as soon as it can be arranged. That is the only path by which we will attain to real Imperial importance. But when academic theorists want us to sell our blood for formal written representation on some Imperial committee—and want us to demand the price in advance—let us realize just what it means.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Balkania the Storm Centre

THERE never was a map of small area representing such a large combination of world forces in focus as this map of Balkania on this page. Chief interest just now centres in Bulgaria. The Allies are landing troops at Salonika for operation against the Bulgars at Strumnitz immediately north. The Austro-Germans are operating along the Danube in the north. Belgrade is in their hands. The Bulgars are advancing from Sofia, their own capital, upon Nish. To the west, at Uskub, they have cut the railway running from Salonika to Nish, necessary for the transport of Allied troops from Salonika. Allied war ships are bombarding the southern ports of Bulgaria on the Aegean. Greece is still in a state of armed neutrality, but will not protest against the further landing of Allied troops at Salonika. Roumania has decided to stay on the fence a while longer. She is not likely to go against the Allies. Neither will she allow Russian troops to pass through to the aid of the Serbs. Russia

must force an entrance through Bulgaria. She is already bombarding the ports of Varna and Burgaz on the Black Sea. Meanwhile, the Austro-German forces are in touch with the Turks, whom they are ready to supply with munitions of war against the Allied forces at the Dardanelles. It seems altogether likely that the main part of this winter's fighting will be done in this area while eastern and western lines hold. With a spectacular and costly success for the time being in the East against the Russians, and a partial success in brute-force diplomacy with the Bulgars against the Allies, Germany finds this a good time to send out feelers for peace on terms of her own suggestion. Germany has tackled the biggest and last of all her spectacular jobs in creating this third front. Constantinople, is twice as far from Berlin as the eastern border of Poland and it can only be reached through a country of much greater difficulty in transportation than Poland.

THE SEVEN STATES OF BALKANIA, BELLIGERENT AND NEUTRAL



This sketch map shows at a glance the complicated area of southern Europe, where the war began in 1914, and where it now converges in diplomacy and military operations. The railway lines from Austria-Hungary through Serbia, Roumania and Bulgaria to Constantinople are all marked, as well as the southward Macedonian line to Salonika, where Anglo-French troops are being landed.